National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, tests publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

NL-339 (r. 88/04)

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WINDIGO AND OTHER DISORDERS

BY

NORMAN SACUTA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1987

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-41121-X

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: NORMAN SACUTA

TITLE OF THESIS: WINDIGO AND OTHER DISORDERS

DEGREE: MASTER OF ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1987

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

Norman Sacuta

10827 - 38th Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6J OK6

Date: August 31, 1987

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled WINDIGO AND OTHER DISORDERS submitted by NORMAN SACUTA in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

.....
Supervisor

.....

.....

Date: August 31, 1987

This collection of poems is
dedicated to my parents who
in no way contributed to the
development of Windigo Psychosis
in any of their children

ABSTRACT

Windigo, a legend of the Algonkian-speaking Natives of Central and Western Canada, is in many ways an embodiment of Native fears about starvation in a hostile environment. Similar in some ways to werewolf mythology, the Windigo is a human-like creature with a heart of ice, hungry for human flesh. To come into contact with a Windigo, or to believe that one has, may result in Windigo possession; recorded cases of Windigo Psychosis by European Canadians in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, have concluded that such murderous behavior is a result of a lack of institutionalized religion and schools. Recent anthropological studies, however, have shown such deductions to be false and suggest that Algonkian-speaking Natives suffer Windigo Psychosis because of cultural traits remarkably similar to European (White) society. This collection of poems attempts to emphasize this point, that modern Canadian society has produced behavior similar to the murder/cannibalism associated with Windigo, through the narrative of a single person as he becomes possessed by Windigo.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

NOTES 5

PART ONE: MEMORY

holding a note 7
...holding 8
holding... 9
held 10
Fever 11
Exposure 13
Edmonton From Highway Two 14
Summer Windigo 15
what I remember about moving out 16

PART TWO: POSSESSION

The Job Interview 18
White Out 19
Windigo Suite:
I A New Apartment and the Principles of Acoustic Phonetics 21
II Distraction 22
III Poem in Ice 23
IV Heat Loss 24
Knock-A-Door-Ginger 25
Early Snow 26
Right After the Last Poem 27
The machine that eats trees 28
Mrs. White's Sick Sister Explained 29
Fixing a Hole 30
Mistabeo 32
Mistabeo gone 33
Just a memo to say 34
Windigo Interviewed by Peter Gzowski, Morningside, November 13 35
Trails End at Shivering 38
Windigo and Other Disorders 39

PART THREE: FULL FLIGHT

Holding Pattern 45
Zeroing In On Cook County Saloon 46
A Woman Loses Spontaneity 47
Windigo Two-Step 48
A voice 49
When I'm a Weasel 50
A Voice Missing 51
Mrs. White's Sick Sister Explains 52
Inside my brother's models 53

Outside My Brother's Window 54
The Window Opened: Windigo 55
A Windigo World 57
On My Brother's Waking 58

BIBLIOGRAPHY 59

VITA 61

INTRODUCTION

I

I first became interested in the Windigo/Legend Psychosis while taking a course in Western Canadian History at The University of Alberta. What was, in effect, a passing comment about the Windigo made during a lecture by Dr. John Foster, quickly became a term paper examining European Canadian reactions to cannibalism over the past three centuries. Beginning with early cases of Windigo possession and ending with the Martin Hartwell incident in 1971, I attempted to chronicle the relatively consistent attitude of European Canadians towards cannibalism, that such an activity is common only in societies which lack Christian institutions. David Thompson, writing about a case of Windigo possession discovered on his journeys in 1796, expresses an attitude about Native society which remains even today:

> Such is the state of society where there are no positive laws to direct mankind.[1]

The implication is clear; had Algonkian-speaking Natives (including Cree, Ojibwa and other Western Canadian Indian groups) adopted the institutions of White culture, acts such as cannibalism would be non-existent. Henry Schoolcraft, an explorer writing in 1839, was even more direct:

> Without farther allusion to their history, it may be observed, that the Saginaws have never made the least advances in education or religion. Cruelty, deception, intemperance, and a blind adherence to the idolatrous customs and superstitions of the nation from which they sprang, have been their characteristics. Up to this day, there is not a school, or teacher, or preacher, among them.[2]

II

The Windigo legends themselves make fascinating reading; although a brief summary does not do justice to the mythology, it is necessary to provide some background for the reader. A Windigo is a human-like creature/spirit thought to inhabit the area around Hudson Bay. Formerly human, the Windigo has developed a heart of ice as well as a huge appetite for human flesh. Algonkian Natives felt the only way to kill a Windigo was to remove its heart and burn it until nothing remained. Any person who came into contact with a Windigo and survived, was likely to become one (thus, the psychiatric term Windigo Psychosis). Howard Norman, in his translated edition of Cree Windigo Tales entitled Where The Chill Came From, notes the close connection between environment and the likelihood of encountering Windigoes:

> It is the extremes of the Swampy Cree Indian's daily life that are so deftly chronicled in their stories about Windigo....Windigo is a conspirator with starvation. Since starvation (especially in winter) in Cree regions is always a possibility, so is an encounter with Windigo.[3]

Norman's comments provide only an environmental cause for the rise of Windigo Legends/Psychosis. If, for example, environment was the singular cause for Windigo possession, why then do other non-Algonkian Natives (including the Inuit) have no similar legends in their cultures? Windigo must have its roots in some unique aspect of Algonkian culture. So much for the European belief that all savages are prone to cannibalism.

III

Seymour Parker, in his fascinating essay entitled "The Wiitiko Psychosis in the Context of Ojibwa Personality and Culture", zeros

in on an aspect of Ojibwa culture which, he feels, led to the presence of Windigo: Individualism.[4] Unlike other Native groups, Algonkians spent winters within isolated nuclear families:

> In addition to the structural isolation of the family, it is also geographically isolated during the greater part of the year when the family is out alone in its hunting territory.[5]

Without the benefit of a large, communal structure during the winter months, individuals within isolated family units had the importance of finding food magnified to a level not experienced in other native groups. Competition between and within families became intense.

This added emphasis on individualism spread throughout Ojibwa society; individuals were even expected to achieve and interpret dreams/visions on their own, in sharp contrast to other Native groups which expected individuals to reveal visions so that elders could interpret them. Parker notes:

> ...it has been observed that the great emphasis placed by parents on the vision quest as a very private achievement stresses to the maturing child that human beings can be of no fundamental aid to him.[6]

Therefore, if a Windigo begins to speak to an individual in dreams, or if an individual's Mistabeo (guardian spirit) is taken over by a Windigo, there is no outlet available for discovering the possession until it is too late.

One of Parker's more interesting points is made when he states,

> security and self-esteem are very vulnerable [for the Ojibwa] and must be reaffirmed by external tangible symbols of success.[7]

The more Parker delves into the reasons for Windigo disorder in the Ojibwa, the less credible comments like those made by Thompson and

Schoolcraft become. The very aspect of Algonkian culture which creates Windigo disorder is the very aspect which brings Indian culture in line with European society: Individualism. Perhaps if the Ojibwa had been less "White" in the arrangement of their institutions, there would be no Windigo.

IV

It is with these facts in mind that I began a collection of poems based on Windigo Psychosis. My plan was to parallel elements of modern Canadian society with Ojibwa culture, to show how competitive individualism in White society is just as likely to incite Windigo-like behavior. Is it possible that patterns of violence and murder develop in White society for the exact same reasons outlined in Parker's essay?

The poems attempt to chronicle a person's changing perceptions throughout the course of Windigo possession. Here, a quest for material gain, for financial reward, replaces the Ojibwa's quest for food. The psychosis occurs because of a lack of intimacy within the family unit and an enforced patriarchal belief (peculiar to North America) in the power of individualism. Who is to say a Windigo cannot be a business man, dressed to kill?

I have tried to keep direct references to Windigo legends to a minimum; it is important that this collection be understandable to people not familiar with the legends. Special thanks to my father for allowing me to quote from one of his patents (#4228854) in "Fixing a Hole".

Notes

[1] David Thompson, "Man Eaters" in Windigo; an Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction, ed. John Colombo (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982), p. 12.

[2] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, "The Weendigoes" in Windigo, p. 20.

[3] Howard Norman, "Introduction" in Where The Chill Came From: Cree Windigo Tales and Journeys, trans. Howard Norman (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982), p. 3.

[4] Seymour Parker, "The Wiitiko Psychosis in the Context of Ojibwa Personality and Culture". American Anthropologist, 62 (1960), pp. 617-18.

[5] Parker, p. 605.

[6] Parker, p. 610.

[7] Parker, p. 608.

Part One
Memory

holding a note

after father
left for work
mother said
don't disturb me

i did
she pounded keys
i pressed
the pedals below

she felt
her fingers fall
between notes
chords came funny

all because
the right pedal
i pressed
up and down

made notes
in her head
stay there
far too long

i got
caught and hit
she phoned
dad at work

that night
he came home
and said
you little monster

...holding

I'm unable to wait
for the next gas station.

Father gives in
pulls off,

waits with the car idling.
High in the mountains

I piss off a cliff
(or so it seemed).

My mother angry
I keep moving away from her.

Back in the car
between siblings in the backseat,

my sister sees nothing wrong.
My brother too many years

older,
bigger.

Wimp,
he says.

I promise to hold it in
when I'm big.

holding...

Inside the circle
 --for we defined
 its imprecise edge with our backs
 close together as we
 faced the fire--
my father told a story,
how a hook was found
bloody on a car door.

What were they doing in Lovers' Lane
that young couple alone?
Surely they'd heard
similar stories.

Along the circle
 --inside our legs pointed
 spokes to the centre fire,
 our backs away
 like a cool forest--
our eyes turned to peer
blind in a hundred directions,
but visible for miles.

Single file to the trailer
we broke an infinite danger;
my chances for survival became
at least as good as the couple's.

held

My parents zippered down the windows,
discussed moving on if
the campers remained next door
with their two big dogs.

Soon trailer canvas took
a darker shade,
my parents' voices stopped.

I was the only one awake.
My brother beside me
kicked in his sleep.
Around my ears suddenly
a short cuff at snaps
where canvas fastened to wood.

Against the rough texture
a shadow came through:
sharp ears of a coyote
precise in soft light he
pressed his nose (not quite so sharp
as scissors) against the trailer.

I touched it through canvas,
heard gravel scatter,
beneath the trailer he moved
to the side where dobermans were tied.

I heard them like gunshots
bolt to chain ends,
bark wildly as the coyote
stood silent.

My parents suddenly upright
inside the trailer shook,
I knew soft movement beneath
where trailer legs stood
on gravel.

The dogs sharp in a semi-circle
turned on each other in frustration
as the coyote moved away,
a sound skittered like dry leaves.

Beside me my brother
took new territory.

Woke me up later
to say I was laughing in my sleep
like a hyena.

Fever

I

One vacation my father took
the family room carpet
and left my mother behind.

He explained:
We're going to look
for the Lost Lemon Mine,
up mountain roads with no railings.

At Ram River we dragged
the carpet off the car top
and took it to the water.
With waders on we stuck
big pegs in one end and unrolled
the carpet on the river bottom;
we let the downstream end
flap loose.

There were other campers
came by with questions as we worked.
They laughed and said:
The Lemon Mine is south near
Pincher Creek
if anywhere at all.

My father said:
They think too literally
and assume the Stoneys are stupid.
The legend is meant to throw us off.
Who's to say the mine is precise
and not a river
or a metaphor?

After several days the river
ran pounds of fine dust
over the rug, we pulled
the heavy fabric to shore,
let it dry on grass.
With heavy sticks we struck
the mud,
hard after hours in the sun.
Flakes began to build in
the centre.

We stopped and made a gully
down the centre of the carpet,
a jar at the end collected
dust and rocks.

My father held the glass high
against the light, his eyes
wide with excitement and pain
looking for small suns.

Once more before the carpet
could be rolled,
he brought his stick high
down sharp on the carpet
as if it were alive.

II

All that condensed to a poem
no bigger than this:
My mother wears a tenth of an ounce
around her neck.

Father still dreams of early retirement.

Exposure (hail storm, July 25/77)

The canvas became green;
my parent's black outlines like
they were blocking a slide screen.
I heard them snap fasteners
to keep flaps down,
the rain suddenly hard.

The first stone made my mother stop.
The bright flashes brought
spots before her
as hail made shadows
when it could.

The patterned ceiling soon
heavy and cold.
She punched canvas
to make stones tumble off.
My father below her
moved rapidly to mop
the loose rain.

Together in one light
for a moment his lowered body,
her upheld hands,
made the shape of a deer.

Gone in darkness
the next light revealed
two separate forms.

Rain came again,
turned stones liquid racing
down the trailer's side as we slept.

The morning we could see as we spoke.
The canvas hard and whole,
my father kicked with both boots
twice before the door opened.

We emerged cool
in the colder air we turned,
saw the hail's white eyes
within the ice,
the trailer like a heart
cracked open.

Edmonton From Highway Two

At fifteen, the final time
on vacation with my parents,
we approached the city at night.

Not like Calgary
the city surprised us rapidly
moving from behind trees
as the car curved to the final
tricky stretch.

Ellerslie at the corner,
we curved past
two large grain elevators,
fast behind us
they seemed to rest
like islands on the trailer top.

One wall bright with flood lights,
a message from the operator:
What shall it profit a man,
if he gain the whole world and
lose his own soul?

Highrise lights wavered white
above the heat dome,
I remembered the road and told Dad
not to lose his way.

Summer Windigo

I saw one last summer
melt thin as heat
waves across the highway.

As I reduced speed ahead
the roadcrew emerged dry as bones,
shirts off in afternoon heat

(the only girl
like a traffic cop
kept cars rolling).

Resumed speed
behind me their bodies irregular
waved like fronds in a sudden current.

New tar glistened wet
as water raced
away from me in all directions.

Warm wind through open window
whispered a solid threat:
Cooler nights to come.

what I remember about moving out

getting an early start

my mother's shadowed face outside the headlights

father's bad driving in the dark

sunrise on the highway

textbooks taking twice the space of furniture

sleeping on foam

phoning home

missing my mother's expression for a second time

Part Two:
Possession

The Job Interview

He may as well be my father.
Questions tied to economic realities:
"Why would you choose an English degree
over Chemistry?"

"All those engineers without work now
I guess you could say I saw it coming."
"Clairvoyant?"
No. Wishful thinking.

"I spend my off hours on campus
correcting their resumes."
"So you've had experience with engineers?"
you could say that;

my father lets me read his technical documents:
Why Walkways Fail in Hotel Ballrooms.
"Would you enjoy working for our corporation?"
Translation: What's your political leaning?

"If you were told by your supervisor
to re-write a document
and another senior executive told you
do the opposite, what would you do?"

Catch 22.
To go back to your first question:
I want to work in a field
where there are no right answers.

White Out

I

I notice the big board
beside Mrs. White.
When I pass her
this first morning she smiles
and moves my bright blue dot
IN
with all the others.
Only the Head of Drilling
keeps his attendance secret.

She buzzes
says she's glad my first call
comes from her,
is there anything I need?

I decline.

II

The terminal is dark.
I reset and receive
logon info.
Hit enter.

The screen white
confusion as everything fills
into neat straight lines.

WELCOME TO DEEP WELL
(a small moving pump)
CHOOSE YOUR SCREEN COLOUR
BEFORE YOU HIT ENTER.
HIT RESET TO RECEIVE
FAVORITE BACKGROUND HUE.
HIT RETURN TO CHANGE
LETTER COLOUR.

Blue on blue:
let's see what happens.

WILL PROVE TOO DIFFICULT TO READ.
PLEASE CONTRAST LETTERS.

White on purple.

WELCOME TO DEEP WELL.
HIT ENTER.

A bit redundant.

III

Mrs. White buttons her coat
in my office doorway,
laments she's lost
my bright blue dot
carried off magnetized
to someone's eyelet,
and this my first day.

She passes the board
looking her age,
not sure if she has extra magnets.

When she's gone I see
she's left herself
IN.

Imagine her surprise tomorrow
discovering she wasted
an entire evening.

WINDIGO SUITE:

I A New Apartment and the Principles of Acoustic Phonetics

White noise; a television on
empty air in a ~~corner~~.
The argument in the hall
may be over by now,
but this noise is as familiar
as snowfall.
Three white dots
fell where the painter's plastic
missed the hardwood. A perfect accident:
The landlord can't blame me
for the triangle
unless I connect the dots.

Outside streets like speech
could lead anywhere,
passing traffic is masked.
An angry trucker throws his voice
like a shotput through my livingroom,
T.V. screen is hushed:
"Speed trap on Deerfoot Trail".

O Calgary,
Oscilliscope of streets!

II Distraction

I've seen that scene in The Exorcist
where Ellen Burstyn watches noise
move across the ceiling above
her daughter's bed.
Rats in the attic, she says
but we know better.

My new apartment has pipes
like fingers snapping in the wall.
Someone is trying to get my attention.

They're succeeding. I'm thinking less
about line breaks (here, I cover my ears
but not before writing it down).

My neighbours say I pound the wall
during snap-happy sex
with Lord knows who.
They hear short slaps as
I chase snaps in plaster.

Word has spread throughout the building
to keep small children away from me.
They've seen the same film and know
the devil has a hard-on.

Pardon me
while I put my fist through the wall.

III Poem in Ice (formerly Gaining Strength)

What does the title suggest?
Beer cans do seem easier to crush
but tins are now aluminum and

we all feel like men.
I have a hold on my pen
but microscopic films ensure

my fingers can never touch.
Deny science--press fingers
together like a magician

bending kitchen utensils.
The pen pops out slippery
on a film of sweat

my fingers almost snap.
Unable to link conflicting images
I bundle up, walk to a corner

watch for traffic and cross.
(Do I need to say there are no cars
when I cross or that my apartment

is now empty?)
Snow falls a predicted measurement,
another principle I don't understand:

why the night is now brighter.
Across the street I see
I've left my bedroom light on,

a poem half finished.
Someone inside scrapes words
on windows for all the world to see:

"the title may need to be changed".

IV Heat Loss

Infra-red photos show cities
like hot spots on a frozen body
(commercials claim blankets can
sense this and send heat where
it's needed most).

Wide, wide patio doors.
Impractical American designs
dominate this city.
You'd think we were in Phoenix.

My own patio door has not been opened
since September. I never go near it
for fear of catching my tongue on frost
and losing taste.

Energy inefficient and crystal covered--
drapery is a seasonal thing.
Outside burglars watch light and shadows
defract into a solid sheet;

is there anyone home?
A chinook arrives like a blowdryer,
small holes expand and meet.
I am exposed.

Knock-A-Door-Ginger

A hare runs across an urban lawn
away from curtain drawn windows,
like a child in a hurry
to escape the neighbourhood German,
the one who never liked kids.

The rabbit has the right idea:
It darts out of headlights,
leaves the shape of cat's paws
and feeds quietly
on the seeds of careless birds;
the perfect crime.

Traps are illegal inside city limits
but in private who can tell
without a search warrant?
Round droppings provide clues
for the man who wants a cheap meal,
no one else knows.

The cost of being sneaky.
Neighbourhood kids should beware
those traps in his yard.
A thin line of parental concern
separates them from discipline
and disappearance.

Early Snow

The weak survive.
Ash so thin they seem
to fit through needles,
hard points sharp where
leaves used to be.
Gutless.
Bare.

The hardy ones:
Elm, Maple, Poplar
heavy with leaves still,
move horribly in cold air.
Their limbs slowly peel off.

It is their undoing:
strength in our climate.
The snow surprised them
with no opening act.

The limbs bend lower,
touch car tops and strip
down trunks.
No heavy falls
just soft clunks:
subtle damage soon covered
by snow.

The weak survive.

Right After the Last Poem

I watch the trees
and weigh my own arms,
bend them towards the false ceiling
like a Highland Dancer.

Perhaps office experts could compute
the weight needed to pull my shoulders
out of their sockets.

Below a tree limb lowers,
white peels out within bark.
Almost mechanical
I let my own arms fall.

The window settles
after wind tunnel gusts.
Snow in a bunch
melts before patterns are apparent.

(There will be a time soon,
perhaps overnight
when snow will stick
hard to these windows,
the temperature inside the tower
will be lowered)

My second arm falls,
all questions unanswered.
Mrs. White waits,
her pad open--
teeth tight around a nail
she pulls and winces
a bit of flesh free.

"Take a memo:
To all computer programmers:
Have final drafts for
system's manual on my desk
by Friday.
Work late if you must
but remember the weather
and wear mittens."

The machine that eats trees*

groans for something softer,
pink flesh would peel off
so much better than bark.

But city workers won't cooperate.
They push limbs limp
with leaves along the chute
and snap back
hands intact,
free of slivers.

Two bins:
One below blades where
stripped bark and leaves collect--
one behind where white wood
snakes out
naked with sap.

Gloved men empty
bins into separate trucks,
their hands hesitate
away from sap-sticky handles.
Around them the machine
shakes on locked legs,
hums like a crowd
waiting for mistakes.

*After a heavy storm, tree branches and limbs often litter streets; this machine is brought out to shred such limbs.

Mrs. White's Sick Sister Explained

"Someone, she says
looks in her windows.
But with no tall buildings around
and her on the third floor,
I'm at a loss

what to do with her.
She's sold all her drapes,
says her life's not theatre
for the masses,
thank you very much.

With no curtain to bring down
she hopes they'll lose interest
go away,
stop pressing their faces
flat against the window.

She's from Saskatchewan you know
the highest rate of schizophrenia
anywhere is there,
scientists think grain dust
does it."

Fixing a Hole

Entering the System:

A REPORT ON ELECTRICAL PRE-HEAT

by John Schwartz (p.eng)

ABSTRACT: A process is provided
for recovery of oil
from an oil and water formation
wherein spaced injection
and production wells penetrate
the formation and a drive fluid
is injected through the injection
well into the formation.

The circular hole made
by said penetration
is as round as his explanation.

A unidirectional electrical potential
gradient is maintained between
anode means in the production well
and cathode means in the injection well
adjacent the formation.

The words collapse
into dark stars,
what's left begins to bend
around the hole.

The whole process is particularly applicable
in heavy-oil bearing formations
in this case the formation
is first preheated and heated
drive fluids injected to improve
the oil mobility within the formation.

The last words sucked inside
shake in the wave
of a sudden power surge
and go--
pencils roll
are lost like light
in fossil fuel.
I duck as furniture
hits the screen
compacts
to a billion pounds per inch.

POWER OFF.

All that
suddenly made pinpoint
sent the speed of light
to some dark place.

I see a small white fox
made of light leap off dot
tumble down the screen
in an alphabet of shapes,
fade out

the word.

Mistabeo

I

Mrs. White once worked radar,
pushed small planes across
exaggerated maps.
With hands like spitfires
she flicked German bombers
off the table edge--
her fingers stretched long
as nets across whole cities,
webbed the white light
of bomb bay doors.

She never heard
what her hands meant
to those men who moved
around the map.
Other words came in
her tight head set.

II

I had a dream
one of those men around the map
married Mrs. White,
whispered in her ear
how everyone felt.

Her face without colour
she faced him
said
she couldn't save them all.

In this dream
the war went on forever
as every D-day failed.

Mrs. White moved to Canada.

III

Pencils are sharp before I arrive.

Coffee appears.

The top line flashes
HOLD
a warning before
the boss drops in.

Mistabeo gone

somewhere parasailing

her voice remains
days later it drills into my head
secret locations for
liquid paper
typewriter ribbon
phone numbers for
systems repairmen

i take no chances
file all locations
off voice
on screen

green words tumble thoughts dry
her voice becomes an entry

ENTER INFORMATION

screen surface dark a moment
i see myself
radioactive inside the computer
my image made bigger
the closer i lean

sudden movement my image
doesn't match
the man inside
recalls memory
words dyslexic across the screen
he keys in new locations

ɹǝʇuǝ

surface dark
his movements again
match my own

recall file
TYPEWRITER RIBBON IS LOCATED
UP YOURS
LIQUID PAPER IS
THEREABOUTS
THE PHONE NUMBERS FOR
SYSTEMS REPAIRMEN
ARE NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS

entry gone

i am alone inside my head

just a memo to say

i have eaten
the engineer
who was in
your office

and who
was evidently
using
poor grammar

forgive me
he was delicious
so cold
and calculating

Windigo Interviewed by Peter Gzowski, Morningside, November 13

you've put on weight since i last saw you

yes and i'm afraid it's gone to my head

(laughter)

seriously is this a regular occurence?

i usually always gain weight in the winter
and grow as big as a fir tree

that big? or are you being metaphoric?

no i've still got some growing to go
it's only november

how have you been spending your nights?

i've taken to following people

really? sounds like (pause) fun

what are they doing out anyway?
what would their employers say?
they offer lame excuses like
insomnia broken alarms atmospheric
pressure i'm floored by statistics
manhours lost to late nights alcohol
and shopping someone needs to put
a stop to it

i see (pause)

so i've taken to following people
late at night when they enter buildings
i wait until a suite light comes on
then mark the location in a small
black book

may i see it?
(pages flipping)
miss T windsor apartments
second floor two windows in
thin and tasty
you're putting me on right?

why? lately
i read the paper as i follow people

when i draw too close they hear
the paper's noise and speed up

you are putting me on let's discuss
some of your other interests

such as?

such as music
what kinds of music do you like?

mostly rock
anything with a solid beat

any favorite songs?

werewolves of london
anything by the stones

no single favorite?

(pause) chewy chewy chewy by tommy james and the shondells

no folk songs?

i'm not a fan no
and no tribal songs either
i'm sick of them
although i don't mind david byrne

speaking of tribes
what was it like before
the white man

you don't quite have your terms right
peter tribes is largely a white word
use nation instead
anyway those were lean years the indians
made for slim pickings
by the middle of winter
it was hardly worth the effort
they were all so thin and eating
each other all they had to do was see me
and off they went chopping
mothers fathers sons and daughters

they ate each other?

sometimes pickings are better now
you don't need to get the immediate family

aren't you being a little cold-hearted about all this?

everything's institutionalized now
people disappear relatives report them
missing police look around for a few days
i get my meal

i could call you a killer

call me cabin fever
whatever's topical

we're almost out of time

oh

is there anything you want to say
to all those people out there?
(pause)

i'll be in touch

(pause)
thanks for coming

no problem peter
you've made me feel comfortable

the instruments are freezing up

(dead air)

Trails End At Shivering

All trails end at shivering.
I remember old war films,
bad men led into mine fields
suddenly without tracks to follow--
a mountie tricked by
bootprints on ice.

Tonight I follow someone's tracks,
try to keep snow out
the edge of my boots,
slide toe first into treads
ahead of me.

Precise placement
inside the track
my boot cracks no new crust,
crystals kicked free race
in snow snakes across the surface,
shake away like rattles.

The tracks stop.
Treads together face me
as if my arrival was watched.

I turn
fit comfortably in stride
and wait.

I am mine.
I am thin ice.

Windigo and Other Disorders

At a bus stop on MacLeod Trail a business man rocks in his shoes from one foot to the other, imitating traffic. His breath warmstreams to his palm, he holds his hand to his face and begins rumbling low growls like a bear. As cars approach his throat opens wide and up come cars in fourth gear, roars like I never heard in parking lots. As each car passes his voice growls down and he waits, rocking, rocking, his hand down now by his side swaying as the next set of vehicles approach. And always his hand rises up like warm air to his face as if something secret was written in his palm.

Commuters move in less regular ways; wrapped in warm clothing they jog on the spot, pause to adjust scarves, hats, their distance from the man who waits with a smile as a semi-trailer approaches. He seems ready to jump from a high place and concentrates on the pit of his palm mustering his biggest blow yet as the big wind off the truck sends the others to shelter under waves of snow. His voice hits crescendo, all eighteen gears like octaves rise until the big wind snaps open his blazer. Skin is exposed; I watch his hand slip between layers and try to warm the ice already formed around his heart. The last snow sprays up behind the truck's flapping guards and he disappears behind billows of white.

When the others emerge from shelter he is gone. They do not notice the absence of someone they have tried to ignore. Far up the street I see he is in the entraceway of stores not open, trying to get warm. He is only as big as my fist.

My sister lifts me high to the top bunk where I watch her down below dance around to records. Even before the disc clicks down she dances to the sound of the motor starting, the tone arm's mechanical pause before the song begins. Her back to me, I blot out her body with the safety board of the bed; her head whips around in an arc above board back and forth from one shoulder to another until her hair stands out on end. Cables carry the song through her head like a laser. Sometimes her shoulders rise above the plane when she jumps. I clap as she breaks the sound barrier and turns to me mouthing the lyrics.

What are you doing in my room?

His fist sonic boom brought down many times on the wall, reverberates up beams from the basement. Janet stops her sock-hop, hair falls like dry rain. All except the strands she pulls from the corner of her mouth. Quiet. David is studying.

Leduc is moving. After each overpass, signs I saw put up last summer declare the difference dropping, down from 44 kilometres.

EDMONTON 120

LEDUC 77

The plow leaves shapes along the shoulder, small boulders roll back behind the grater's blade, crack like white coal (diamonds shine in sunlight). I drive behind, shatter the shapes like toys; in the mirror

I watch them drift back across the lane disrupted by fast cars pulling out to pass (at Red Deer I watched the water tower and wondered how they stop the centre from freezing. I caught you in the corner of my eye, a morning crystal, and stopped the car).

EDMONTON 108
LEDUC 69

Another sign. Anthony Henday's furthest point west; we pass too fast to read the words, doing the distance in one tenth the time.

EDMONTON 100
LEDUC 64

We swing wide to pass the plow. White mist, thicker, waves across the windows wrap around the car. White out. Wipers smoothly scrape snow like dead skin. Wind off the grater's blade buffs the passenger side; small thumps as lumps hit the windshield. A small yellow light strobes ahead, now even, now passed. We hit the air head-on.

EDMONTON 60
LEDUC 30

You're gone. Behind, the wind reversed by two vehicles passing, curls to a vortex (some say tornadoes start this way). Dust devil of snow spins across lanes, is lost behind the speeding plow. I see you now, thumb out, hitching back to Calgary.

EDMONTON 25

What are you doing in my room?

David stands at the foot of my bed, lifts the wing of his model and brings it down on my sheets. The aircraft rests in the gullies my feet make, as if it crashed there during the war, only now discovered. I am seven. Mother keeps quiet, puts down Dr. Suess and waits for him to finish. David leans forward, rests his knuckles on the sheets and speaks.

"If you ever go in my room again I'll kill you. Listen close. I've set up a camera in there. The first creak of the door triggers the picture taking. I'll know whoever comes in. If you ever touch my models again I'll kick your ass around the block. Got it?"

I wasn't in your room. I sit watching the closed door and wonder what pictures would have told you.

"Long journey?" asks Janet.
"Not bad," I had company.

We all wander the rims of our glasses, wondering what to say. David asks Mother for more wine. Father pulls presents from sacks, places

them around the tree.

"You can all have your old rooms tonight, okay?'

Through the night someone silently opens and closes doors. Pictures are taken, breathing observed (my Father, afraid for us, still checks in the night). I wake, look up and wonder who stands at the foot of my bed.

"What are you doing in my room?"

The furnace kicks in, but I am frozen. He opens my door and exists. I hear David's door like a tone arm swing open; the wind through my window bursts the screen, snow streams beneath the bed and lifts me to my brother's room.

David's breathing. My cool breath. His breath, crystals fall like stars on my sleeping brother. My breath, his breath. David's regular breathing. I whisper:

"What are you doing in my room?"

Part Three:
Full Flight

Holding Pattern

I've named this poem before beginning
to make it whole, hard like
my heart of ice.

The title bites,
begins the poem's metamorphosis:

Tonight is dark skin
spread thin like a hide
still alive,
a cartoon caricature
run flat.

I am in flight,
high like Superman
but without his moral purpose-
My back brushes sky,
makes skin flake
snow.

Circling, circling.

So little choice below.

Circling.

Better to peel back thin skin,
reach inside ribs and give
the moon a bite.
Frozen crescent remains
like a rime.

This poem has become
something I never wanted.

Zeroing In On Cook County Saloon

The neon first like heating elements
except snow does not sizzle when it lands.
Next, the empty lot across piled orange
with super-heated snow, the sky
hangs low holding in neon.
At last, the big wood doors just ajar
bright around the frame like a flame
inside cooks the inhabitants.

The door handle too hot to hold
as people change shape, crack.
Within they have no limbs left,
wrapped around each other in
the embrace of a love song.

Well done.

A Woman Loses Spontaneity

You dance above me
at the back of the bar
celebrating Christmas
while the band plays Santa Claus:
One song more before closing.

Dance above me.
Your chair tips a morse code
on the shorter fourth leg.
You are a laugh behind their backs,
the punchline before it's told.
You dance,
postponed
untold
your voice above all
unheard at the back of the bar.

I love you.

The band leaves--
and loves you too.
They will return,
they always do.
You must know this?

What was that,
you love me too,
what?

They've come back out.
Was there any doubt?
Dance,
again above me,
premeditated:
the encore you knew would come.

Quick.
Let's dance.

Windigo Two-Step

My boots beneath your feet
are footrests.
You catch breath during slow songs,
comment how long my strides are.

Again, a polka--
your feet slide off as if
on block ice,
I step, touch,
hop, step, touch
hop, step,
widen my stride beyond
your reach,
floor burns stockings beneath.

Sudden dip
exposes holes.
Your hair bushes hardwood.

Upright
hold tight,
my stride the widest yet.
You take two steps to my one.

Wider.
Your waist above
can't wait for legs
to drag even--
feet lift off the floor.

"Oh," you say,
"my burning feet, my burning
feet of fire."

And here I thought my dancing
would leave you cold.

A voice

behind me
warms my heart.
I hate him for it.

His index finger
up and down in my shoulder's
soft spot,
presses harder for emphasis
on certain words:
"Hey buddy, who do you think
you're dancing with,
who do you think?"

A genius.
He telegraphs messages
through skin.
My nerves are party lines
to muscles,
everyone is listening.
I shiver, face him,
decide I better get one in:
"Mr. Spock! Nice to see you.
It seems Nurse Chapel here
has a passion for cold men."

His finger points,
waves like a snake in my face.
"A funnyman, huh?"

"A hungry man."
I correct
and bite his finger
off.

On Vulcan his loss
would be insignificant as
a pinched nerve--
on Earth his free hand
pows me
into outer space.

When I'm a Weasel

When I'm a weasel
I'll break your heart,
make your body a stag
show movie, crawl
inside every opening,
tunnel to your heart
always.

Outside you'll put on
loose fitting clothes,
hide my movements
at parties, excuse yourself
to stand naked in
the hostess' mirror,
my trails more visible
than acne.

When I'm a weasel
I'll take your heart in
my mouth, breathe
my weasel air,
make you shiver so
nowhere's warm
enough.

You'll call neighbours,
become the one named
homewrecker, slut,
only hoping to find
a little warmth.

When I'm a weasel
I'll crawl out
your mouth during
lovemaking, treat
your lover to the same
story
as if that
makes this
all right.

A Voice Missing

She's made her life a silent movie.
Her windows without curtains
confuse birds (what few there are
in winter). She's not seen
the pile of sparrows
three floors down.
Inside
she becomes every actor
ever known, does nothing
out of character
to surprise her audience,
hopes they'll leave
bored by predictable plots.

But birds keep coming.
She thinks the thumps
are men unable to lip-read,
giant with intentions
to make Garbo speak.

Colder nights
her only reprieve:
heavy frost makes windows
white screens of projection light.

Tonight
I zoom down off satellites
like a bird crashing
blind into the open mouth
of Meryl Streep.

Her window cracks.

Mrs. White's Sick Sister Explains

"She was never very bright.
listen, you want to know
what I did those nights
the windows were covered with frost?
I pretended to be her."

Inside my brother's models

seams are meticulous--
scraped clean like
the lean line between
halves of his brain.

He's kept creativity outside--
made sure his physics
spaced ribs in the fuselage
an equal distance apart.

Thick plastic lets no light
reveal the outside shape of decals,
slapped on when it seemed
the job was over.

Tied with string
the model spins slowly
in the breath above
his open mouth,

hovers between sleeping minds.

Outside My Brother's Window

I position a bone between
myself and the moon,
move a joint within the crescent
an armlength away.

I've grown so big I touch
natural satellites.
I've carved the fingernail moon
to a manicure.

In one stride I am
around the house
kneeling to see inside
a second story window.
There is warmth around sealed edges,
my fingernails are small moons
beneath silicone,
they make window seams crack.

Inside the room
you hear me coming
across the roof,
dull thuds like
the steps of Neil Armstrong.

You stop a spinning aircraft
(your brother's body
 curved in sleep under
 dark sheets,
 a city during blackout)
grip it and become
a giant.

In my fist a mythical
man in the moon.

In your fist the missing
Amelia Erhart.

Shall we share a meal?

The Window Opened: Windigo

A window cracked open so we could meet--
you in your cool white suit
and very practical:
"Have his heart.
I'll take his head."
You pull down the sheets
scratch small dots along lines
where David's shoulder and brisket
make good eating.

My voice has frozen to
a thin funnel of wind
rushing frost across David's chest.
Your voice is sharp
as icicles waiting to fall
small end into my brother's
abdomen
chest
legs--
"Look at it as surgery
except he never wakes up.
Listen, I've got others
to eat tonight,
can we get on with it?
What's the matter,
Chinook got your tongue?"

You hand me knives of ice.
Still warm, my hands
make handles wet.
The weapons slip,
shatter by your smart
white shoes.
"Oh bother.
Now what do we use?"

Words form
blocks of ice in my throat--
yours remain liquid nitrogen
flowing advice:
"How about the wings off his models,
made sharp by all that sanding?
Isn't that what you artistic types
call poetic justice?"

You bring me wings
as weapons,
test them on your own skin.
Dry ice bubbles out.

My mouth opens.
Words fall frozen,
clink to the floor in disarray.
You bend down to find
something you've never heard before,
hard now in your hands
they are unavoidable.
Your fine white suit
unravels:
light frost on unshadowed roofs.
Thin limbs poke out
between strands,
you are no muscle man.
"Boy, it's hot in here."

Your voice grows weaker
my own mouth thaws
begins to speak
another language:

My Mother's Voice

"Couldn't you have made him
drive away slowly,
and left me
a little longer in the light?"

A Windigo World

model wings
incissors
pinch your heart
free

but

every minute
inside
the earth cools
another degree

On my brother's waking

window curtains move against him
like breath they billow in
then relax back across his skin.
His landscape builds
fleshy peaks.

He wonders aloud about bedsheets,
wakes everyone with barefoot
feet on linoleum. He hits
a warm pool of water, suddenly wonders
what generates heat even when
the window is open.

He brushes his foot again
through my Windigo heart,
breaks beads of tension
thin across tile,
the water soon slick
ice reformed.

He looks lost without
logical answers.
Around the house I hear him
looking for something
he can sink his teeth into.

Bibliography

Bowering, George. "Windigo" (poem). In Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction. Ed. John Colombo. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982, pp. 187-191.

Colombo, John Robert: Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982.

Cooper, J. M. "The Cree Witiko Psychosis." Primitive Man, 6 (1933), pp. 178-92.

Foon, Dennis. The Windigo and the Last Days of Paul Bunyan (play). Toronto: Playwrights Co-op, 1978.

Hay, Thomas. "The Windigo Psychosis." American Anthropologist, 73 (1971), pp. 1-22.

Jiles, Paulette. "Windigo" (poem). In Celestial Navigation. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984, p. 104.

Norman, Howard, trans. Where The Chill Came From: Cree Windigo Tales and Journeys. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982.

Parker, Seymour. "The Wiitiko Psychosis in the Context of Ojibwa Personality and Culture." American Anthropologist, 62 (1960), pp. 603-623.

Pinkerton, Kathrene. Windigo (novel). New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945.

Schoolcraft, Henry Rowe. "The Weendigoes." In Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction. Ed. John Colombo. Saskatchewan: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982, pp. 14-20.

Teicher, Morton. Windigo Psychosis. Seattle: American Ethnological Society, 1960.

Thompson, David. "Man Eaters." In Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction. Ed. John Colombo. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982, pp. 10-12.

VITA

NAME: Norman Sacuta

PLACE OF BIRTH: Montreal, Quebec

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1962

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: B.A. (Special) University of Alberta

HONOURS AND AWARDS: Harry Ainlay Scholarship, 1980;

University of British Columbia Graduate Fellowship, 1987;

Post-Secondary Scholarship, University of British Columbia, 1987;

Second Prize Alberta Culture Short Story Competition, 1987.

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE: Prism International Magazine Editorial Board, 1987.

PUBLICATIONS: "Hallway Light" (poem). In Alberta Poetry Yearbook. Edmonton: Writers' Guild of Alberta, 1983, p.35

"A Plain Story" (short story). Edmonton Magazine. November, 1987.